

**Psychology Externship Program
VA Medical Center
Northport, New York**



***Michael F. Marino, Ph.D., Chief of Psychology
Janet E. Eschen, Ph.D., Director of Training
Amy I. Tal, Ph.D., Assistant Training Director***

Table of Content

	Page
Introduction	3
Eligibility and Requirements	3
Rotations	
Community Living Centers	4
Dual Diagnosis Recovery Center	4
Mental Hygiene Clinic	4
Post-Deployment Readjustment Program	5
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Program	5
Psychology Health	5
Psychology Testing Center	6
Psychosocial Rehabilitation Recovery Center	6
Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation	6
Application Process	7

Introduction

The Northport VAMC is located in Suffolk County, approximately 40 miles from midtown Manhattan. Opened in 1928 as a psychiatric hospital, the VA Medical Center at Northport was converted to a full service Medical Center in 1971. The Northport VAMC provides inpatient medical, surgical, and psychiatric treatment. There is also nursing home care and residential treatment for substance abuse and PTSD. Over 600,000 medical and psychiatric outpatient visits were made last year to the Medical Center and to its Community Based Outpatient Clinics throughout Long Island. The Northport VAMC is accredited by The Joint Commission and is a clinical campus of the School of Medicine at Stony Brook University. Several programs are accredited by The Commission on Accreditation for Rehabilitation Facilities.

All male and female veterans are eligible to utilize the VA for their mental and physical health needs. The Northport VAMC attracts veterans from throughout the New York City metropolitan area. The Psychology Service Training program is committed to training externs in working with our culturally diverse population. In addition, several programs where externs receive training follow a recovery-oriented therapeutic community model.

The Psychology Service at the Northport VA Medical Center is an autonomous service headed by a Chief, and includes 22 full-time psychologists and one part-time psychologist. The range of professional activities conducted is exceptionally wide. Generally, psychologists are members of multidisciplinary treatment teams and, in some cases, are directors of treatment programs. Staff members conduct psychological and neuropsychological assessments and provide psychotherapy and behavioral treatments. Psychologists also provide consultation to other health care providers. The Northport VAMC is an APA accredited psychology internship site.

Overview of the Externship

The Northport VA psychology service is committed to the professional development of its externs. Our mission is to provide clinical training that focuses on the advancement of skill in the delivery of psychotherapy and assessment, greater comfort in a multidisciplinary medical setting, and an increased confidence in the role of a culturally sensitive and ethically responsible psychologist. The externship program adheres to the Practitioner-Scientist model. Consistent with this approach, an extern will work collaboratively with the psychology service to develop a schedule that meets his/her goals based on the rotations available. Externs work in the same areas as staff psychologists and interns.

We offer a number of possible rotations, which allows for a varied experience. An extern's assignment may include activities in one or more setting. A description of these opportunities is provided on the following pages. Depending on an extern's schedule, he/she may also participate in the didactic seminars held on Tues and Thus afternoons. Seminars cover material such as Motivational Interviewing, Psychopharmacology, Military Sexual Trauma, Psychodiagnostics, Group Therapy, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Cultural Diversity. Externs will receive individual face-to-face supervision in accordance with the selected rotations. Opportunities for therapeutic intervention include individual and group therapy. Externs often participate in program team meetings. Depending on the rotation, externs may be responsible for the delivery of therapy, intakes, assessments, and/or documentation in the computerized medical record. Externs have a shared office in which to work.

Eligibility and Requirements

To be eligible for externship placement, an extern must be in good standing at an APA accredited doctoral program in psychology. Applicants must be US citizens. The training year generally begins in

September and ends in May. An extern, with the agreement of his/ her supervisor(s), may choose to extend the externship through July or August. Summer externships are available and tend to begin in June and end in August. A commitment of 16 hours is required. Typically the day begins at 8am and ends at 4:30pm. Specific days are individualized based on the extern's availability and the program's needs. Externs have off all Federal holidays and may take leave (not to exceed 8 days) with appropriate notice. Externs are expected to adhere to VA policy. An orientation to the VA, psychology service, and program rotations will occur during the first few week of externship. Externships are not funded positions.

Rotations

The following rotations may be available. We will work collaboratively on a schedule based on your goals and the needs and availability of individual programs.

Community Living Centers

The residents of these units present varied medical, physical and psychiatric conditions, including cardiac and respiratory conditions, sequelae of stroke, dementia, schizophrenia, and major depression. The two psychologists assigned to the Community Living Centers (Nursing Home Care Units) conduct cognitive, emotional, and behavioral assessments on newly admitted residents. In addition, they provide individual, group and family therapy as well as ongoing consultation to staff as part of the units' multidisciplinary treatment teams. Two of the five units are long-term skilled nursing facilities for veterans with primarily medical diagnoses. One of the units provides palliative care for veterans at end-of-life, while another unit provides respite services or short-stay rehabilitative services for veterans residing in the community. The final unit is a geropsychiatric unit for aging veterans with chronic psychiatric diagnoses or advanced dementia.

Possible clinical activities: Externs have the opportunity to participate in individual and group therapy with either a long-term geropsychiatric or a geriatric population. Externs may also provide brief interventions for short-stay patients or individual assessment and therapy for palliative care patients. Other activities would include weekly interdisciplinary team meetings, patient rounds, and any scheduled trainings. Days would vary depending on the unit(s) in which an extern is placed.

Supervisors: Amy Scott, PsyD; Lauren Flanagan, PsyD

Dual Diagnosis Recovery Center

The Dual Diagnosis Recovery Center is an evidence-based interdisciplinary outpatient treatment program that aims to improve the quality of life for veterans with co-occurring severe and persistent mental illness and active substance use disorders by integrating substance abuse services with traditional mental health care. The core philosophy of the DDRC rests on the principles of bio-psychosocial rehabilitation, combining pharmacological, psychological, educational, and social interventions to assist the veteran to stabilize his/her illness and when possible, to establish a meaningful role in the community. Interventions will be culturally sensitive, dignifying, and respectful of individuality. DDRC therapists endeavor to establish therapeutic relationships with veterans that are free of power struggles, collaborative, draw upon existing strengths, and are focused on instilling hope.

Possible clinical activities: Externs participating in the DDRC rotation will be involved, under appropriate supervision, in the provision of group psychotherapy and psychoeducation. Psychoeducation may include opportunities such as Relapse Prevention, Anger Management, Pain Management and Dialectical Behavior Therapy.

Supervisor: Tracy French, PsyD

Mental Hygiene Clinic

The Mental Hygiene Clinic (MHC) is an outpatient psychiatric program offering psychiatric, psychological, and social work services to veterans of all service eras. Psychologists in the MHC provide therapy in a range of modalities and administer assessments. The population of patients is varied including the full range of psychopathology and life cycle related issues. Externs will develop skills in the delivery, assessment, and planning of individual and/or couples therapy in an interdisciplinary setting.

Possible clinical activities: Externs have the opportunity to provide short and long-term individual psychotherapy for 4-6 individuals. Externs conduct intake interviews, develop collaborative treatment plans, and coordinate care with other providers as needed. Experience with marital/family cases may be available. Externs may identify particular populations of interest (e.g., specific diagnoses, specific age group, etc.) and may receive training in the delivery of evidence based practices. Days and hours are flexible.

Supervisor: Amy Tal, PhD

Post-Deployment Readjustment Program

This program is geared to addressing the mental health needs of those individuals from the Iraq and Afghanistan war zones. It emphasizes making mental health services accessible to active duty military personnel and to veterans who have recently returned. Fridays are mandatory.

Possible clinical activities: Externs provide individual therapy (2-4 cases) and conduct weekly intakes. As part of this experience, externs learn and practice evidence based treatments for PTSD.

Supervisors: Stephen Long, PhD; Melody Millando-Wirtenson, PhD

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Program

The PTSD program includes a 90 day Residential Program and an After-care program. The program treats combat and military related trauma in Veterans with a diagnosis of complex PTSD and co-morbid Substance Use Disorders. The PTSD Residential Rehabilitation Program (PRRP) provides intensive individual and group psychotherapy which include evidence-based therapies along with other therapeutic interventions with the focus on the development of insight and strategies for coping with PTSD symptoms and on maintaining recovery from drugs and alcohol. The residential unit has a bed capacity for up to 8 residents and provides treatment to male veterans who are culturally and ethnically diverse with a wide range of ages. Veterans of all wars are eligible for treatment but the population is generally comprised of veterans who served during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and the Vietnam War.

Possible Clinical Activities: Externs may participate in groups, community meetings, & staff meetings

Supervisors: David Gately, PhD; Vivian Mendelsohn, PhD

Psychology Health

Psychologists provide therapeutic services throughout the medical center. Psychologists in the primary care clinics and the Women's Wellness Center deliver therapy, conduct assessments, and offer consultative services. Weight Management, Diabetes Support, Smoking Cessation, and Pain Management groups promote wellness in veterans.

Possible clinical activities: Externs provide short-term focused individual psychotherapy. Externs may also participate in the MOVE! weight management group. Cognitive-behavioral, group dynamics, group support, and other approaches are used to help veterans lose weight. The Smoking Cessation Program is another opportunity open to externs. The clinic provides comprehensive assessment, treatment and follow-up support in a group and individual format.

Supervisors: Joanne Taylor, PhD; Alan Weiss, PhD

Psychology Testing Center

Externs develop skills in providing consultation to other health care providers and in designing and administering an assessment battery that addresses a specific referral question. The majority of the referrals are for neuropsychological assessment, but externs may also conduct psychodiagnostic assessments. Externs are supervised in all aspects of the evaluation, including the clinical interview, administration and interpretation of appropriate test batteries, and report writing.

Possible clinical activities: Administration, interpretation, and report writing. Possible presenting problems include differential diagnosis, complaints of memory issues, and assessment of Traumatic Brain Injury.

Supervisors: William Cheney, PhD; Mark Sandberg, PhD

Psychosocial Rehabilitation Recovery Center

The Psychosocial Rehabilitation Recovery Center (PRRC) is a recovery-based program for veterans with mental health disorders. It provides a structured, supportive environment within which veterans can develop the skills and confidence necessary to live satisfying lives and function successfully in the community. It empowers veterans to take control of their lives by becoming actively involved in their recovery, in the program itself, and in the outside community. The multidisciplinary treatment team includes staff from Psychology, Social Work/Chaplaincy, Nursing, and Vocational Rehabilitation. Peer support technicians are also on the staff and offer a unique perspective for our veterans.

Services offered include primary group therapy (e.g., PTSD group, Mood Disorders group), psycho-educational groups (e.g., Smoking Cessation, Weight Management), skills training groups (e.g., Life Skills, Anger Management), socialization, recreation (e.g., Golf, Bingo) and self-help activities. Veterans are scheduled to attend the program from one to five days per week depending on their needs as assessed by the treatment team.

Possible clinical activities: Externs attend community and staff meetings, lead and co-lead groups, and participate fully in treatment planning and implementation. Days are flexible, most therapy groups occur between 9am and 11am on a Mon-Wed or Tue-Thu schedule.

Supervisors: Margaret Rayne, PsyD; Amy Tal, PhD

Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program

The SARRTP is a residential treatment program for substance abusers who require a structured and therapeutic environment. The 30 residents participate in substance abuse treatment, vocational rehabilitation and self-help groups. Externs function as members of a multidisciplinary team, which includes staff from Psychology, Vocational Rehabilitation, Social Work and paraprofessionals.

Possible clinical activities: Externs have the opportunity to participate in community meeting, staff meeting, and group therapy on Thursdays. Psychoeducational groups, including Relapse Prevention, Positive Relationship Skills and Anger Management occur on Tuesdays.

Supervisors: Janet Eschen, PhD; Erin Kode, PsyD; Marc Shulman, PhD

Application Process

Please send an email or mail a letter of interest, CV, and two letters of recommendation to:

Amy Tal, Ph.D.
Assistant Training Director
Northport VAMC
116B
79 Middleville Rd.
Northport, NY 11768

Email: Amyllene.Tal@va.gov

Phone: (631) 261- 4400 ext 5805

*Applications will be accepted after January 17 and will be forwarded to the appropriate supervisor(s).